

Full Length Research Paper

Shedding more light on the impacts of quality certified systems in small service enterprises: A multidimensional analysis

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The purpose of this paper is to describe the small enterprises within the service sector that have adopted certified quality systems, focusing on the motives that have encouraged these enterprises to do so and the organizational impacts such adoptions have had. The results highlight the importance that these enterprises grant to certified quality systems as a strategic tool that can be used in a proactive way to contend with market changes and adverse economic situations, providing them commercial benefits in particular. These results can help managers of small service enterprises analyse the advantage or disadvantage of the position in the market that they can achieve when they decide to implement certified quality systems. This paper provides evidence of how the motives behind small service enterprises' implementation of quality systems differ from those found by research papers, focused on other types of service and industrial enterprises.

Key words: Quality management, organizational performance, quality certificated systems, small business, service business, impacts of quality.

INTRODUCTION

Numerous empirical research papers have focused on the introduction of the ISO 9000. These papers analyse, amongst other factors, the motivation for implementing this regulation and the results obtained from its implementation (Vloeberghs and Bellens, 1996; Huang et al., 1999; Acharya and Ray, 2000; Gustafsson et al., 2001; Mezher et al., 2004; Ruzevicius et al., 2004; Van der Wiele et al., 2005; Bhuiyan and Alam, 2005; Magd, 2008; Alonso-Almeida et al., 2009).

In Spain, the culture or tradition of quality management is fairly widespread throughout the industrial and service sectors. Furthermore, Spain is the third most prolific user of ISO 9000 certificates in the world behind China, and Italy (AENOR, 2011). However, enterprises in the tourist industry in Spain have historically complained about the

difficulties they have encountered when seeking to become certified based on international ISO standards, given the high cost involved and the lack of specialised auditors in tourism (Camisón and Yepes, 1994). These kind of difficulties are the explanation of the low rate of penetration of the ISO 9000 family of standards in the tourism industry, with a mere 286 certified enterprises up to 2009 (Forum Calidad, 2010).

The introduction of quality management systems to the tourist industry in Spain has been very important. Indeed, through the ICTE (Institute for Spanish Tourist Quality) and other programmes for improving quality, Spain was the first country in the world to create specific quality standards for each tourist sub-sector, with a definition of standards for procedures and services, quality system requirements and certificate systems, as well as an independent third party that guarantees the fulfilment of these standards (Alonso-Almeida et al., 2006). This pioneer effort involving the set up of standardised quality management systems specific to each tourism sub-sector

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Table 1. Tourist quality standards in Spain.

original standards	Corresponding standard (Nationwide)
Quality standard for travel agencies.	UNE 189001:2006
Quality standard for spas.	UNE 186001:2009
Quality standard for camp sites and holiday resorts.	UNE 184001:2007
Quality standard for golf courses.	UNE 188001:2008
Quality standard for rural accommodation.	UNE 183001:2009
Quality standard for convention bureaus	UNE 187004:2008
Quality standard for rural protected spaces.	UNE 187002:2008
Quality standard for ski and mountain resorts.	UNE 188002:2006
Quality standard for hotels and tourist apartments.	UNE 182001:2008
Quality standard for tourist information.	UNE 187003:2008
Quality standard for supranational tourist information offices.	UNE 189001:2009
Quality standard for convention centres.	UNE 187004:2008
Quality standard for beaches.	UNE 187001:2008
Quality standard for restaurants.	UNE 167000:2006
Quality standard for time share companies.	UNE 185001:2009
Quality standard for active tourism	UNE 188003:2009
Quality standard for nightlife	UNE 188005:2009
Quality standard for nautical sports installations	UNE 188004:2009

Source: adapted from Alonso-Almeida et al. (2006) and ICTE (2011).

will be the subject of analysis in this paper, as many small enterprises have chosen to introduce this specific national standard of quality. This paper aims to describe those small hotel enterprises that have adopted a management system and quality assurance standards by examining the motivation that prompted them to do so and the results they have obtained.

This study is intended to shed some light on the behaviour of small hotel enterprises with regard to quality system adoption, given that the scarce research on this topic deals mainly with small enterprises in the manufacturing sector or service enterprises in general (Hendricks and Singhall, 2001; Sun and Cheng, 2002; Beheshti and Lollar, 2003; Bendell and Boulter, 2004; Boiral and Roy, 2007; Danes et al., 2008) or in international excellence models (Alonso-Almeida, 2011).

LITERATURE REVIEW AND STUDY HYPOTHESIS

Certified quality systems in Spanish tourism

Quality assurance in tourism has its origins in the strengthening of the relationship between client and supplier, wherein the latter aspires to assure the provision of services within consumer protection legislation, thus establishing a series of norms for the tourist industry and health and safety regulation in the workplace. The aforementioned legal requirements provide a set of specifications requiring compulsory fulfilment. In the case of the hotel industry, and given that as a general rule for tourism

it is not possible to try the product before its consumption, the best means of communicating the type of expected service is to classify establishments into categories. Each category is associated with a group of physical attributes and services that regulates infrastructure and equipment standards.

As a result, this sector has been well aware of the need to participate in the decision to establish adequate minimum standards of quality for each tourism sub-sector and to use certification to update market efforts to improve service quality. The results have made Spain a pioneer in Europe with regard to the introduction of private initiatives that have encouraged a wide variety of voluntary systems of quality certification in tourism (Alonso-Almeida et al., 2006). Nevertheless, the aforementioned initiatives have used methodologies and requirements that differ greatly and have been rather disorganised, which has meant that these initiatives have not received much market recognition.

In this context, a major project known as the Spanish Tourism Quality System (STQS), backed by government aid, has been underway since 1996. The STQS highlights the concept of "Spanish Tourism Quality" as a symbol of distinction in international markets. The development of this strategy includes the creation of specific quality systems for the different tourism sub-sectors (Table 1) that incorporate the certification guarantees of the establishment and the advantages of introducing continuous improvement and total quality within organisations (Alonso-Almeida et al., 2006; Rodríguez-Antón et al., 2008). Due to the existence of this dual body of quality

standards for Spanish tourist enterprises to utilise—international norms and specific national norms—we propose the following research hypothesis:

H₁: Small Spanish hotels prefer the specific national tourist quality standards to generic international standards such as ISO 9000.

Motives for implementing a certified quality system among small enterprises

Management's decision to involve an enterprise in a quality certification process depends on either proactive or reactive motives (Vloeberghs and Bellen, 1996; Brown et al., 1998), depending on whether the involvement stems primarily from a desire for the internal improvement of the organisation or as a response to the external market (Taylor and Meegan, 1997; Brown et al., 1998).

Reactive motives are responses to external stimuli, such as a desire to gain access to government grants or new technologies or external pressures from customers, markets, suppliers, and competitors (Hardjomo et al., 1997; Gustafsson et al., 2001; Sun and Cheng, 2002; Magd and Curri, 2003; Chirstmann and Taylor, 2005).

However, in the absence of pressures or incentives, enterprises can seek certification through quality management systems in response to internal motivations. These types of motives, namely proactive motives, may include a desire to improve internal processes and productivity within particular functional areas or a more general wish to upgrade overall corporate strategy in accordance with the principles of quality management (Huang et al., 1999; Singels et al., 2001; Pan, 2003). In the case of SMEs, studies suggest that reactive motives are more important than proactive motives in seeking certification (Gustafsson et al., 2001). In particular, customer pressure appears to be the main reason for SMEs to acquire quality certification (Sun and Cheng, 2002; Bendell and Boulter, 2004; Boiral and Roy, 2007).

Although the research evidence on SMEs is scant, the following hypothesis can be proposed on the basis of the above discussion:

H₂: Reactive motives for implementing a certified quality system are more important than proactive motives among small and medium-sized enterprises in the hotel industry.

Benefits of quality certificates in small enterprises

Some authors have suggested that quality management is a source of competitive advantage for small enterprises (Upton et al., 2001). However, research results confirming this statement to date are scarce. Moreover, conceptual models outnumber empirical research (Briscoe et al., 2005). Most of the empirical research regarding the impact or outcome of quality systems has

been carried out on large enterprises, with very few studies concentrating exclusively on small enterprises. Furthermore, when small enterprises are the focus, they tend to be from the industrial sector or the service sector in general and focus on the ISO 9000 standard (Beheshti and Lollar, 2003; Briscoe et al., 2005; Danes et al., 2008).

Hendricks and Singhal (2001) found that small enterprises obtained greater profits than larger firms as a result of quality certification; furthermore, these authors reported that specialised SMEs were more successful than diversified enterprises. In a similar vein, Sun and Cheng (2002), who studied the effects of ISO 9000 certification in Norwegian enterprises of various sizes, found that quality certification assisted SMEs, but not large enterprises, in improving the quality of their products and services and hence their business returns.

Beheshti and Lollar (2003), who studied 98 small and medium-sized enterprises in a variety of manufacturing and service sectors, identified eight positive effects of quality programmes: (i) product quality enhancement; (ii) improved efficiency; (iii) improved customer service; (iv) cost reduction; (v) improved decision-making processes; (vi) fewer quality defects; (vii) improved teamwork; and (viii) enhanced productivity. The identification of obsolete and inefficient tasks, improved procedure control, and isolation of possible problems and ways of resolving them in providing a service, are all improvements derived from quality norms, which have an impact on financial results (Brown et al., 1998; Ragothaman and Korte, 1999). All of these improvements benefit financial results to the extent that they improve income, pre-tax profits, returns on investment and cost reduction (Easton and Jarrell, 1998; Das et al., 2000; Wilson and Collier, 2000; Kaynak, 2003; Corbett et al., 2005; Terlaak and King, 2006; Benner and Veloso, 2008).

Finally, Danes et al. (2008) analysed 572 small family firms and concluded that these small enterprises were sincerely concerned with quality management; indeed, quality control of their products or services was the most commonly implemented strategy used to enhance reputation among customers. These results are of interest because they contradict the findings of some previous studies, which had contended that small enterprises were not concerned with implementing quality management principles. Overall, prior research suggests that there are both internal and external benefits to be reaped by small enterprises that introduce certified quality systems. Thus, this research paper proposes the following hypothesis:

H₃: The implementation of a quality system implies both internal and external benefits for small hotel enterprises.

Classification of enterprises according to motivational factors and benefits obtained

Boiral and Roy (2003, 2007) established and updated a

classification system for enterprises adopting quality systems by linking the motives and the benefits. According to the framework created by these authors, using a combination of the two variables, motives and benefits, four groups with rational differences in terms of adherence to a quality system can be identified. The ISO Integrators consider that motivational factors of internal efficiency prevail over external ones, given that they regard the quality standard as a management tool (Jager et al., 2010). Therefore, they achieve high levels of internal benefits for the whole enterprise. At the other end of the scale are the ritual integrators, which regard the quality standard as a marketing tool. For this reason, the assimilation of the standard is superficial and its impact is predominantly external. The quality norm in these cases does not improve internal procedures, as it is not incorporated into the culture of the enterprise.

The quality enthusiasts and the dissidents are situated between these two extremes. For the quality enthusiasts, the quality standard is both a business management tool and a marketing tool that procures internal and external benefits. The dissidents are those enterprises in which the managers have decided to introduce quality systems; however, they have not managed to reconcile this with the business culture and have failed to provide sufficient communication to implement the quality systems. As a result, there is resistance within the enterprise at the time of implementation, and the level of benefits is very low, such that enterprises consider not renewing the certification and abandoning the quality system. These types of enterprises only imitate their competitors and are not compromised with quality (Zbaracki, 1998). These enterprises also fail to adopt quality practices as their own (Abrahamson 1991), thus escalating existing problems by burdening the enterprise with what can be understood as bureaucracy (Boiral, 2003).

Boiral and Roy (2007) discovered that among the small enterprises used in their study, the quality enthusiasts prevailed. Based on these results, this paper proposes the following hypothesis:

H₄: Small hotel enterprises are mainly quality enthusiasts.

METHODOLOGY

Sample

The hotel industry in Spain was chosen for several reasons, given aims of this study. First of all, the importance of the tourism industry into the gross domestic product in Spain is essential (such that it accounts for around 10% of the GDP in 2009), together with Spain's prominence as a tourist destination (at the end of 2009, Spain was third in the world in terms of the number of tourists visiting and tourism spending). The hotel industry has a particularly powerful influence, with 13,035 establishments, considering hotels and hostels, which accommodated 82,951,290 travellers in 1.065.824 hotel beds (INE, 2010). Second, as previously explained, the Spanish hotel industry has a specific quality standard for hotels.

A database was created that included all of the certified hotels with some type of quality system based on either nationwide or international norms. This research focused on the analysis of small hotel enterprises in accordance with the definition of the European Commission, this was defined as enterprises with less than 50 employees operating in Spain that have been certified according to an international generic quality norm or a specific norm of national hotel quality. The total population for the study consisted of 281 hotel enterprises.

Design of the research

To carry out this study, a questionnaire was designed with four sections based on a pre-test that was sent to researchers and experts in quality and subsequently tested in three hotel enterprises of different sizes. The first section, certification status, explains the quality certificates possessed by the respondent firms, how long they have been certified, and their commitment to quality. The second section is motivation for certification: the firms' motives for becoming certified (which included a total of 10 items). The third section measures the impacts of certification: the organisational impacts (on business processes, financial performance, and stakeholders) attributed to quality certificates (which included a total of 22 items). The fourth and final section contains data on respondent firms and includes questions regarding the control and classification of respondent firms.

Data were gathered via telephone surveys of general managers and directors of operations of the hotels. Valid responses were obtained from 111 of the 281 SMEs, yielding a response rate of 39.50%. This response rate can be considered good given that it is higher than the Spanish average, which is 25% (Martínez-Costa and Martínez-Lorente, 2006) and higher than the minimum suggested by Malhotra and Grover (1998).

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

Once the data were recorded and statistical analysis was addressed, a descriptive study regarding the functioning of certification in small Spanish hotel enterprises was carried out, as shown in Table 2. The results clearly show the preference of these hotel enterprises for national certified quality systems specific to the tourist industry, as 84.85% of the enterprises surveyed used the UNE 18001 norm, which is specific to hotels and tourist apartments. Furthermore, although not shown in the table, 30.30% of the enterprises possessed more than one quality certificate. It is noteworthy that 100% of those certified with the quality standard ISO 9001:2000 are certified according to the specific UNE 18001 norm for hotels. This reinforces the idea that some authors have previously indicated: that these are complementary and not exclusionary standards (Alonso-Almeida et al., 2006). Another important point is that even small enterprises are concerned with environmental aspects. These types of certification, both nationwide and international, are the most sought after in terms of the introduction of certified quality systems, accounting for 16.67% of implementation.

These figures corroborate our first hypothesis (H₁), indicating that small Spanish hotel enterprises preferred

Table 2. Certified quality systems adopted by small enterprises.

Certificate	Percentage of certified enterprises	Average lifespan of certification	Type of certificate
UNE 18001	84.85	2004	Nationwide
ISO 9001:2000	21.21	2005	International
ISO 14001:2004	10.61	2005	International
EMAS	3.03	2003	International
Biosphere	3.03	2005	Nationwide
Nationwide excellence models	9.09	2008	Nationwide
Other certified quality systems	7.58	2008	Nationwide

Table 3. Motivation for introducing quality systems in small hotels.

Motives	Factor 1 (market)	Factor 2 (efficiency)	Factor 3 (anticipation)
Customer pressure and demands	0.577		
Pressure from competitors	0.635		
Market demands	0.596		
Demands from suppliers	0.859		
Possibility of obtaining public aid and subventions	0.559		
Improved internal processes		0.979	
Improved work in functional areas		0.802	
Improved hotel image			0.544
Maintenance of hotel's competitive position in times of economic slowdown			0.833
Using quality as part of the hotel's strategy			0.621
Own values	3.605	2.191	1.083
Explained variance	36.053	21.913	10.833
Accumulated variance	36.053	57.965	68.798

the specific standards of tourist quality to international generic standards. The average lifespan of the certificates is short with the longest lifespan lasting four years. As a consequence, a large percentage of the sample has not carried out the first certificate renewal process at present; therefore, it is possible that considerable benefits are yet to be obtained by these enterprises.

Subsequently, an internal consistency trial was undertaken for both groups (with the two groups of items being dealt with separately) using Cronbach's alpha. The alpha coefficient was 0.789 for the group of 10 items regarding motivation no significant benefits were accrued with regard to Cronbach's alpha if some of the elements taken into account were eliminated; the result was 0.958 for the 22 items that referred to the results. Therefore, the unidimensionality of each of the scales can be accepted.

Following this, factorial analyses were carried out using the maximum verosimilarity method with the objective of grouping the items for motivation and benefits. The KMO test results, with values of 0.710 and 0.834, respectively, are compatible with a good level of adjustment; the Bartlett sphericity test, with values of 250.068 and

1,256.302, respectively, and critical values of probability of 0.000, lead to the rejection of the null hypothesis that the correlation matrix is equal to the identity. The study of the communalities after extraction and the anti-image matrix showed the suitability of all items from the two groups; moreover, convergence was achieved in few iterations for both groups. This led us to conclude that the adjustments in both cases were acceptable.

For the extracted factors, only those with auto values above or equal to 1 have been taken into account. Subsequently, a varimax rotation using Kaiser normalisation was carried out for the motives whose values are outlined in Table 3, which includes only factor loadings above 0.5; these account for 68.796% of total variance (58.401% after extraction). As can be seen in Table 3, the principal motives for certification are collected in the first factor, market. Small hotel enterprises obtain certification as a reaction to the pressure exerted by different external agents, which prompts us to suppose that these enterprises consider certification to be a procedure that is important to master to maintain a position in the market.

The second factor, efficiency, brings together the

Table 4. Classification of the motives for certification the sampled enterprises.

Motives	Mean	Associated factor	External = E; Internal = I Motive
Customer pressure and demands	3.05	Market	E
Pressure from competitors	3.05	Market	E
Market demands	3.54	Market	E
Demands from suppliers	2.24	Market	E
Possibility of obtaining public aid and subventions	2.32	Market	E
Improved internal processes	4.05	Efficiency	I
Improved work in functional areas	3.93	Efficiency	I
Improved hotel image	4.39	Anticipation	I
Maintenance of hotel's competitive position in times of economic slowdown	3.85	Anticipation	I
Using quality as part of the hotel's strategy	4.12	Anticipation	I

motives related to improving quality in general and improving enterprise operations in particular. Finally, the third factor, anticipation, embraces the enterprise's aspiration for quality to form a part of the strategy for anticipating threats such as those arising from periods of economic downturn and developing the ability to foresee opportunities to take advantage of them and improve the enterprise's image to maintain or improve competitive advantage.

The factors obtained have been classified as internal or external to fit them to the classification used by Boiral and Roy (2007). In this way, the market factor reflects the existence of external reasons for certification, whilst the factors classified as efficiency and anticipation refer to internal reasons for certification. However, the nature of these motives is in many cases unclear as one of these factors could be mixed in nature if it contains both external and internal elements. This can be exemplified by improvement of a hotel's image. The perception of this image is undoubtedly of an external nature as it comes from the customers; however, it originates from the quality of the products and services that the hotel itself provides. In cases of mixed motives, we have chosen to emphasise the internal or external direction depending on the relative importance of the two elements when determining the nature of each motive in introducing a quality system.

The first column in Table 4 compiles the motives mentioned in the questionnaire, the second column collates the overall mean value of the points given in the questionnaire, the third column refers to the associated motivation and the fourth column deals with the type of motive external or internal. It can be seen that the principal motives for obtaining certification involved improving the hotel's image, encompassing quality as a part of the strategy and improving the internal procedures of the hotel; all of these obtain mean values above 4. On the other hand, neither the demands of suppliers nor the possibility of obtaining subsidies or government aid

demonstrated acceptable relevance.

As a consequence, we are unable to positively correlate our second hypothesis (H2), which suggested that the reactive motives, those arising from external pressures, outweigh the proactive pressures, those arising from internal initiatives, when implementing a certified quality system in small hotels. Having analysed the motives encouraging small hotel enterprises to attain certification, we can now consider the benefits to be obtained from introducing these quality systems.

In Table 5, the first four extracted factors appear (there were eight factors with values > 1) in the group of items regarding organisational impact. Subsequently, a varimax rotation using Kaiser normalisation was undertaken, including factor loadings above 0.5 for the first four factors, which represent 69.283% of the total variance (60.766% following extraction).

The first factor is closely linked to improvement in the provision of the services that customers receive and the enhancement of the enterprise's image, hence the term customer and operations benefits for the hotel. This factor refers to the direct improvement that the customers gain with regard to hotel services, which is measured in the reduction in complaints and reclamations, repetition of hotel stay, enhanced response to customer demands and better all-around service. These improvements are the result, in particular, of procedures becoming standardised and, therefore, of increases in reliability and the likelihood of all employees being prepared for any eventuality. If customers perceive an overall improvement in the service provided by the hotel, the hotel's image is improved and the customer bears this in mind when considering forthcoming stays. In short, there is mutual gain for both the hotel and the customer.

The second factor is termed economic-financial benefits. This factor encompasses the increase in productivity and operating profit that result from the increase in the hotel's income and the reduction in operating costs, and this in turn heightens the enterprise's global economic

Table 5. Rotated matrix of the impacts from quality certificates.

Impact of implementing quality systems	Factor 1 (Customer and operations benefits)	Factor 2 (Economic and financial benefits)	Factor 3 (Benefits from supplier relationships)	Factor 4 (Public image benefits)
Reduced errors	0.629			
Improvement in reliability of operations.	0.513			
Reduced complaints	0.860			
Increased customer satisfaction	0.818			
Increased customer loyalty	0.684			
Greater personal attention for clients	0.799			
Better solutions for customer problems	0.768			
Improved hotel image and reputation	0.770			
Priority position in customers' minds	0.525			
General improvement in services provided by the hotel	0.730			
Smaller overall effort for hotel maintenance	0.666			
Increased productivity		0.605		
Increased hotel income		0.740		
Reduced operating costs		0.513		
Improved operating profit		0.655		
Improved financial ratio		0.581		
Greater supplier commitment			0.670	
Greater supplier satisfaction			0.758	
Improved supplier procedures			0.682	
Enhanced information transparency from the hotel				0.768
Greater confidence in the hotel				0.893
Increased participation in social projects				0.634
Own values	13,584	2,331	2,009	1,467
Explained variance	48.513	8.325	7.174	5.271
Accumulated variance	48.513	56.838	64.012	69.283

and financial results.

For the third factor, benefits to supplier relationships, the hotels improve supplier commitment, satisfaction procedures. This coincides with previous research papers suggesting that quality certificates improve supplier management as they

often require enterprises to have written procedures for selecting and evaluating suppliers, basing their decision on the extent to which customers' requirements are met. As in the case of customer relations, this factor covers mutual benefits for both the hotel and the suppliers, with

a beneficial outcome for both.

Finally, the fourth factor, termed benefits to public image, refers to the effect of the certificate on other social agents who are interested in the enterprise's progress, as it is affected by the hotel's participating in a greater number of social

Table 6. Classification of benefits resulting from certification.

Benefits	Mean	Associated factor	External = E; Internal= I Motive
Reduced errors	3.51	Customer and Operations	I
Improvement reliability of operations	4.28	Customer and Operations	I
Reduced complaints	4.38	Customer and Operations	I
Increased customer satisfaction	4.38	Customer and Operations	I
Increased customer loyalty	4.15	Customer and Operations	I
Greater personal attention to clients	4.53	Customer and Operations	I
Better solutions for customer problems	4.45	Customer and Operations	I
Improved hotel image and reputation	4.28	Customer and Operations	E
Priority position in minds of customers	3.73	Customer and Operations	E
General improvement in services provided by the hotel	4.43	Customer and Operations	I
Smaller overall effort for hotel maintenance	3.90	Customer and Operations	I
Increased productivity	3.51	Economic-Financial	I
Increased hotel income	3.28	Economic-Financial	I
Reduced operating costs	3.65	Economic-Financial	I
Improved operating profit	3.28	Economic-Financial	I
Improved financial ratio	3.41	Economic-Financial	I
Greater supplier commitment	3.48	Supplier Relationships	E
Greater supplier satisfaction	3.18	Supplier Relationships	E
Improvement in supplier procedures	3.47	Supplier Relationships	E
Enhanced information transparency from the hotel	3.05	Public image	E
Greater confidence in the hotel	3.14	Public image	E
Increased participation in social projects	2.38	Public image	E

projects and becoming more transparent and more trustworthy.

As in the case of the motives, the factors of the benefits obtained were classified as internal or external benefits; once again, some impacts were of a mixed nature (Rodríguez-Antón and Alonso-Almeida, 2008). For example, the impact on the results statement is such that each of the two large components has conflicting contents income has a more external nature, whereas expenditure is rather more internal. Thus, on the one hand, factors regarding commercial benefits and benefits to the income statement derived from certification are principally internal. On the other hand, the factors related to benefits to supplier relationships and benefits to public image draw together external reasons for certification. The first column of Table 6 lists the impacts gleaned from the questionnaire, the second column refers to the overall mean value of the points assigned by those participating in the questionnaire, the third column refers to the associated impact and the fourth column identifies the nature (external or internal) of the preponderant impact.

As can be seen from this table, the most significant impacts have resulted in enhanced personal attention and better solutions for customers, overall improvement in the services provided by the hotel, a reduction in the complaints received and a heightened level of satisfaction, all received valuations above 4. In contrast, the

introduction of these certified systems has barely affected hotel participation in social projects; it has also failed to generate greater informative transparency, nor has greater trust in the hotel been developed. These are aspects to be addressed by the enterprise in the future as part of the continual improvement process inherent in certified quality systems.

Therefore, the third hypothesis (H_3) is validated; both external and internal benefits are produced when quality systems are introduced in small hotel enterprises.

To verify whether there are different types of enterprises with regard to the valuation of the implicit factors behind the motives and benefits of introducing quality systems, a hierarchical cluster analysis was conducted. This analysis resulted in six differentiated groups of enterprises, shown in Table 7. Prior to interpreting the different groups, it is necessary to investigate whether important differences are found when assessing all or some of these factors. With this in mind, an ANOVA was conducted; significant differences were detected when assessing the six groups of enterprises detected with a level of significance of 0.000.

When interpreting the different groups, it is important to take into account the fact that the greater the number of points given for each factor, the greater the importance of the motives accrued to implement a quality system. Thus, the impact of the benefits obtained in the enterprise will

Table 7. Factorial points of each group of enterprises and classification.

Groups (%)	Motives			Benefits				Classification
	Market	Efficiency	Anticipation	Customer and operations	Economic and financial	Supplier relationships	Public image	
1 (5.36)	1.081	0.670	0.102	-0.091	0.266	0.860	0.532	Ritual integrators
2 (21.43)	-1.012	0.217	1.335	0.727	1.485	-0.469	-0.990	ISO Integrators
3 (17.86)	0.092	0.295	-0.471	0.071	0.282	-0.042	0.533	Quality enthusiasts
4 (14.29)	-0.399	-0.450	0.978	0.562	-1.029	0.478	0.072	Quality enthusiasts
5 (17.86)	0.077	0.124	-1.503	-1.202	-0.113	-0.423	-1.048	ISO Integrators
6 (23.21)	-1.191	-2.461	-1.039	-0.336	-1.098	-1.201	0.253	Dissidents

be increased. Table 7 shows the points that each of the enterprise groups grants to each factor and the classification of each group in the Boiral and Roy (2007) framework.

The first group includes 5.36% of the enterprises from the sample. These are the first to assess the market motivational factor. These enterprises are also the first to assess the efficiency factor with regard to both quality and environment, as shown by their quest for national and international certification. As expected, the principal benefits are external to the enterprise, concerning first suppliers, then public image. These enterprises have made an effort to achieve impacts on both extremes of the extended value chain. In accordance with the reference model, these enterprises could be considered ritual integrators.

The second group of enterprises involves 21.43% of the enterprises and represents those that value the certificate most for motives related to Anticipation that is to say, they incorporate quality as part of the enterprise's strategy for overcoming circumstantial threats. In this group of enterprises, the greatest benefits are achieved for income statement, followed by commercial benefits which obtain the largest number of points for

this group. However, both the market motivational factor and the external impacts are negative, which means that the quest for internal improvement represents the main concern and objective in this group. These enterprises utilize nationwide or international certificates of quality management in a balanced way, and we classify them as ISO integrators.

The third group includes 17.86% of the enterprises analysed and its main motivation is efficiency, an internal motive, followed by the external motives, both of which are positive. The greatest values were achieved for public image, income statement and commercial factors. For this reason, we classify these enterprises as quality enthusiasts.

The fourth group seeks certification for motives of anticipation, which has enabled them to obtain commercial benefits, followed by benefits related to relationships with suppliers and public image. The results suggest that these enterprises are preparing to face difficult situations. Certification has not been totally incorporated given that the benefits do not as yet reach significant levels. This group of enterprises, which represents 14.29% of the sample, is also classified as quality enthusiasts.

The fifth group, which represents 17.86% of the enterprises studied, endeavours to obtain certification for motives regarding efficiency. It would appear that certification is yet to be consolidated as the enterprises have only recently obtained these certificates and therefore have been unable to enjoy all the advantages that they provide. This group of enterprises is initially classified as ISO integrators; every effort must be made to incorporate quality into the enterprise's culture, as failure to do so could convert them into dissidents.

The sixth group collects the remaining enterprises 23.21% that seem to have no particular motive for seeking certification. Conceivably, this type of enterprise considers certification to be a fad or something that could be helpful in the future.

These enterprises do perceive benefits with regard to their image, albeit to a limited extent; therefore we can consider them dissidents. These enterprises find no reason for introducing a quality norm, nor do they expect to obtain clear benefits from doing so. For this reason, it is feasible that the enterprise may abandon the route towards quality and excellence if management fails to take steps to incorporate these elements into the

enterprise's culture.

In keeping with these results, we find that 32.15% of small Spanish hotel enterprises behave like quality enthusiasts, which allows us to at least partially corroborate our fourth hypothesis (H4). Having addressed our analyses and corroborated the proposed hypotheses, we shall now discuss the results and principal conclusions of this study.

DISCUSSION

Some studies have observed that the value enterprises give international quality certificates diminish as the total number of certificates increase. On the other hand, as other authors such as Delmas (2002) and Prakash et al. (2006) have pointed out, each country's political and regulatory context and, in particular, the authoritative function of public administration plays an important role in extending the scope of a national or international standard supporting the implementation and certification of these systems by way of direct or indirect subsidies (Alonso-Almeida, 2011).

This appears to be the current situation in Spain, where the clear pledge by the tourist industry together with the government for specific quality certifications is taking root, at least in small hotel enterprises (Rodríguez-Antón et al., 2008). Moreover, the existence of these standards limits the negative influence of the barriers to quality certification, such as a lack of specific appropriateness for this sector or the high costs of certification that must be endured, given that with these, they can count on support from the public administration. Thus, our first hypothesis is supported by our analysis; we can argue that small hotel enterprises prefer specific national standards. These findings are in accord with those found by other studies, which highlights the inadequacy of implementing an international norm, whether because of the high level of investment that enterprises may be required to make (Tsiotras and Gotzamani, 1996); employee indifference especially if the enterprise has already been operating in the market for a few years (Brown et al., 1998); or the high level of investment required for training (Nwankawo, 2000).

With regard to motive, the various research studies available concerning quality system certification agree that there are diverse reasons an enterprise might decide to certify a quality system. In this study, both external and internal motives appear to be operating, almost to the same extent. Amongst the external pressures, customer pressure can be highlighted in those sectors, such as the hotel industry, where customer authority is very high especially given that the final consumer of the service does not correspond to the individual customer, as the real customers are travel distribution groups such as tour operators (Rodríguez-Antón and Alonso-Almeida, 2008). Moreover, the intensity of competition over the last few

years has meant that the quest for quality has helped to improve the internal workings of the enterprise and that small enterprises consider it essential to adhere to quality standards as part of their strategy for maintaining position in the market (Jager et al., 2010).

As far as benefits are concerned, this study shows that quality certificates mainly provide the enterprise with customer and operational benefits, which are the most sought after benefits for the enterprise obtaining certification (Wiele et al., 2001). It would appear that quality certificates have positive effects on customers given that they contribute positively to the quality of the services provided, customer satisfaction and repeat purchases. These results coincide with the results obtained in previous literature (Gotzamani, 2002). Likewise, improvement in operations and efficiency is noted and affects the internal costs of the enterprise; these improvements are reaped in the income statement. Therefore, both external and internal benefits are produced through the introduction of quality systems. Invariably, the internal benefits will attract customers and improve the overall image of the enterprise in the market. Consequently, the firm will be able to attract customers whose attention it would have been otherwise difficult to obtain.

Finally, the classification of hotel enterprises from the sample has resulted in these enterprises' being able to qualify as quality enthusiasts, enterprises wanting to obtain a quality certificate for both external and internal motives. For this reason, they perceive both internal and external benefits. As can be seen from the empirical analysis, enterprises perceive benefits, regardless of the motives they seek when they are becoming certified. The results obtained also provide evidence of the cross-effects within the certification endeavour for internal and external motives. Only those enterprises that have no particular motive for seeking certification or that have obtained certification only recently receive no benefits from introducing a certified quality system. These results coincide with those found by Boiral and Roy (2007), suggesting that amongst small enterprises, quality enthusiasts predominate, with ritual integrators and dissidents following with similar rates.

In conclusion, the results obtained for small hotels appear to reflect the importance placed by these enterprises on certified quality systems as a strategic tool used proactively to manage market changes and have a positive impact on adverse economic situations. This is due to the fact that these certificates provide enterprises with a guide for optimising internal procedures; therefore, despite their small size, these businesses are able to position themselves more favourably than their competitors.

LIMITATIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This paper encounters certain limitations that can be

resolved by undertaking more ambitious projects in the future, particularly projects that would allow a larger sample of enterprises to be addressed. The objective of this study was to analyse the behaviour of small Spanish hotels exclusively in terms of a series of aspects related to quality certification. The limit of fifty employees, which was to a certain extent, artificial, meant that this category would not include other hotel enterprises with very similar characteristics that have a few more employees. Therefore, a similar study could be carried out with both small and medium-sized hotels, thereby allowing for greater precision.

It would also be interesting to conduct a comparative study of behaviours related to the pursuit of quality certification between hotel enterprises within in the same competitive context from competing countries. In particular, a comparative study could be carried out amongst the five European countries that are the largest tourist receivers: France, Spain, Italy, the United Kingdom and Germany.

To explore this issue in more detail, a comparative study could be undertaken between hotel enterprises that have obtained quality certification and those that have opted not to; such a study could help determine whether the aforementioned have a competitive advantage over the latter and why or why not.

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